

that has great credibility in the marketplace, and I believe we'll get it. I'm very hopeful.

Q. And will you sign a continuing resolution in the meantime?

The President. Oh, I hope we'll get a good continuing resolution. That's quite important. It's important that we not just walk away from our responsibilities.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Fish, chairman and chief executive officer, Citizens Financial Group, and New York Jets football player Nick Lowry. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Teleconference on Education and an Exchange With Reporters

September 12, 1995

The President. Can you all hear me?

School Superintendents. Yes, yes.

The President. That's great. Well, I'm on the phone here with Secretary Riley. And I want to thank all you superintendents for joining me today on this conference call to discuss the importance of continuing our national commitment to education. All of you know better than I that America has just started back to school.

Over the last week I have met with chief executive officers from major corporations, such as IBM and TRW, with mayors and county executives from large and small cities, and yesterday with college students from 10 different universities in 5 States. And I have just come from a meeting with some of our young national service corps, AmeriCorps, participants, along with college presidents and business leaders who support their involvement. And everywhere I go, when I deal with people who are working with Americans who are struggling to make the most of their own lives or trying to help our country adjust to the global economy, I hear the same message: It is wrong for our economy to be growing with so many hardworking Americans' incomes not growing. And everywhere I hear the same response: The answer is to give people a better education, to give our young people

the tools they need to learn and to give all Americans a chance to build better lives.

That's why I presented to Congress a balanced budget, which shows that we can get rid of the deficit and still invest more in education and training, to put our young people and our future first. That's why we have committed ourselves to a greater investment in Head Start, to the Goals 2000 program that many of you are very familiar with, to decreasing class sizes through programs like Title I, to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.

These are not bureaucratic programs. These are programs that relate to the future of our children, the strength of our economy, and therefore the future of all the rest of us in America.

I know that it is easy to cut these programs here in Washington. We are a long way from the schools and the grassroots. You're a long way from the human consequences of those cuts. But these things actually mean something where all of you live and work. And that's what I want you to talk about.

For example, four schools in Portland, Oregon, helping 9th and 10th graders to reach higher standards in math and science, will lose their funding, just at the time when we know our young people are taking more advanced courses, doing more homework, and trying harder to measure up to global standards of excellence. Four hundred and fifty teaching assistants and other staff who help children with basic reading, writing, and math skills will have to be laid off in Miami. There are examples like this all across the country. That's why we've had such incredibly strong bipartisan business support for our education budget.

Joe Gorman, the chief executive officer of TRW, said last week that, and I quote, "Goals 2000 is critically important. Far more than dollars are involved. It provides incentives to States to change themselves within their educational systems." Lou Gerstner, the CEO of IBM, said, "Goals 2000 is the fragile beginning of the establishment of a culture of measuring standards and accountability in our country. We have to go way beyond Goals 2000, but if we lose Goals 2000 it is," and I quote, "an incredibly negative setback for our country."

So I think that we've got good, bipartisan support in the grassroots for continuing to invest in education. We are only helping people who are willing to help themselves. We are not giving anything to people who don't need it, and we are not giving things to people who won't use it. We're just making an investment in America's future. And I hope that together all of us can succeed in securing both a balanced budget and an education budget that will be good for America's future.

I'd like to ask Secretary Riley to say a few words, and then I'd like to hear from all of you. Mr. Secretary.

[At this point, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley described the progress made in education and the need for greater investment.]

The President. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Now I'd like to call on the superintendents to speak. And I'd like to emphasize one more time something that—the American taxpayers always say that they don't want us giving anybody something for nothing. They don't want us giving people things they don't need. And they're right about that.

But we're talking here about a student population that we now know is working harder, doing more homework, investing more in their own future, and understanding more about education. And as I said, I was—just yesterday, I was at Southern Illinois University. And I met with 11 recipients of student aid. And every one of them was a working person struggling to get a good education to make their own lives better and this country stronger. So that's what we're talking about here. And it's a good expenditure of our tax dollars.

I'd like to begin by calling on the Superintendent of the Dade County, Florida, schools, Octavio Visiedo. And sir, you're the first up. Just say whatever's on your mind.

[Mr. Visieno discussed the recent layoff of paraprofessionals in Dade County and emphasized its impact on students who recently immigrated.]

The President. Thank you very much. I'd like to now ask the Superintendent of the Portland, Oregon, schools to speak, Jack Bierwirth. Mr. Bierwirth.

[Mr. Bierwirth discussed the Head Start program, Goals 2000, and the need for national education standards.]

The President. I thank you for saying that. I want to emphasize, because there's been some—a little bit of controversy about Goals 2000 that I think the genius of the program is that under Secretary Riley's leadership, we have done more to give more flexibility to local school districts and individual schools to creatively pursue their own solutions for excellence while trying to develop national standards so that parents could know what their children should know and whether they're learning it. And it seems to me that was a very good bargain for the American people and one we ought not to back off of now.

Mr. Bierwirth. And it's beginning to pay off very well out here.

The President. That's the thing. It's just beginning to work. And I really appreciate you saying that.

I'd like to call on Dr. Gerry House, the superintendent of the Memphis school systems. Dr. House.

[Dr. House discussed the impact of funding cuts on child nutrition and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and described the Memphis school system's antismoking campaign.]

The President. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for telling us about your smoke-free program. I appreciate that, and I hope you are very successful with it.

I think I'd like to make just two points here. One is—one the Secretary of Education made me clearly aware of. And that is that we're fixing to have another big increase in school students, what Secretary Riley called the "baby boom echo." And that means that these reductions in the school lunch program will be much more severe than they might look on paper because we have calculated—in our budget we asked for money based on the increase in student population we know we're going to have. And a disproportionate number of these young people, of course, do come from low-income families and often don't get the kind of nourishment they need.

The other point I want to make is that the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program passed as a bipartisan program. This was not, when it was started, a partisan issue. This was a bipartisan issue. And one of the things that the Republicans have always said is that we needed to do more to change people's behavior as it relates to drugs and violence, that we can't just concentrate on drug treatment, we can't just concentrate on punishing people, we can't just concentrate on trying to interdict drugs when they come in this country. We have to do more to change people's behavior.

This program works on changing people's behavior and, therefore, to undermine it and not give the schools the resources they need to deal with this terrific problem, it seems to me to run counter to the position that they've taken consistently, at least, since I've been here in Washington for the last 2½ years.

So I appreciate what you said, and I hope we can do well by both those programs before this is over.

I'd like to call on the Superintendent from Milwaukee now, Robert Jasna, to say whatever he would like to say.

[Mr. Jasna discussed the impact of funding cuts on the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, the School-to-Work program, and class size.]

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Jasna. As you know, a lot of—this conversation is being held not only in the presence of representatives of the national media here but for regional media around the country. So I think I should make two points about the very important comment you've made.

First of all, the School-to-Work program, which you discussed, is basically the effort of the local school districts around the country supported by Federal and sometimes by State funds to train people both academically and vocationally while they're in school, both in the school and in the workplace, and to continue that training after they leave high school so they have a chance to get a good job with a growing income.

In the United States, because we don't have a comprehensive system of training people who don't go on to colleges, we often

find that the earnings of people without a college education are dropping dramatically and have been for 20 years now.

The School-to-Work program is an attempt to build in a flexible American way the kind of systems that the Germans, for example, have had for many years, which have led to rising incomes for a lot of their workers without university degrees but with very good education and very good training.

So this would hit a huge percentage of young American workers who have the chance to escape the declining earnings that have plagued non-college educated Americans for 20 years now.

And on the class size issue, I just want to mention one thing to hammer this home. There has been an enormous amount of educational research in the last 10 years especially demonstrating that if you can get class sizes down to under 20 to 1, especially—you mentioned you had class sizes of 15 to 1—that kids with serious learning problems can dramatically improve with that kind of student-teacher ratio.

So if you have to double it, there's no question that the learning capacity of our system or our teaching capacity will go way down. And I really appreciate both the points you made.

Mr. Jasna. Thank you.

The President. I'd like to now call on a longtime friend of mine, the Superintendent of the Philadelphia schools, David Hornbeck. David, are you there?

[Mr. Hornbeck discussed the impact of funding cuts on Goals 2000, the Head Start program, and AmeriCorps.]

The President. Thank you, David, and thank you for what you said about Goals 2000. I think one of the problems we've had with Goals 2000 is that only the educators have understood it. You know, it doesn't ring any bells in the public mind. And I think when people understand it's about high expectations, high standards, and grassroots reform, it will help us to continue the work.

On AmeriCorps, let me say one of the things that came out today. Today we had representatives of most of the colleges and universities in Rhode Island, and business leaders from Rhode Island and Boston that

are supporting it, and we also had a man who worked as President Ford's Commissioner of Education who had evaluated the program. And they said that one of the attacks on AmeriCorps was that if young people got paid for their college education for volunteering in their communities, it would run volunteers off, and that quite to the contrary, the average AmeriCorps volunteer had generated 12 more volunteers. And you say in Philadelphia it's up to 20 in the schools, so that's a wonderful statement, and I thank you for your good work and for what you said today.

Now I want to call on a gentleman who was here just a few days ago to visit with me about some of these issues, Albert Thompson, the Superintendent of the Buffalo, New York, schools.

Mr. Thompson.

[Mr. Thompson discussed the impact of Chapter I cuts on several groups of students. Secretary Riley concluded the remarks by indicating that the proposed cuts would represent a retreat from support of education.]

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Let me just close by thanking all of you for the work you're doing out there every day, and through you, your principals and your teachers, and the parents that are helping you. You know, this issue—I wanted to do this call today to make it clear that this issue is not just another money issue; this is about the future of this country. And these programs we're talking about, every one has been enacted or expanded with bipartisan support. And the direction that I have taken since I've been President, working with Secretary Riley, rooted in our experience as Governors with people like you, has been to focus on high expectations, high standards, and high accountability and rewarding the assumption of personal responsibility by students.

These are the things that the American people know we need to do. And everybody knows we can't turn around the stagnation of American incomes unless we dramatically increase the output but also the investment in American education.

So I think that you know that history is on your side, that right is on your side. We're just going to have to keep working here so that we can prevail in Washington and make sure that here in Washington people understand the consequences of what they do out there where you live. And you have gone a long way to help us make that case today, and we're very, very grateful to you.

Thank you.

School Superintendents. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all. Good-bye.

Education Budget

Q. Mr. President, do you think you're going to be able to save these programs? It looks like there's a real wall there.

The President. Yes, I do, because I think—I think that—keep in mind, if you look at the educational programs that I started here, like Goals 2000, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, the School-to-Work program, the AmeriCorps program, or if you look at the ones we've expanded, like Head Start, or the ones we've reformed, like the Chapter I program, without exception, these programs had bipartisan support, not only out in the country but in the Congress.

Now the Congress is basically operating within a budget resolution which has an arbitrary time frame of 7 years and an arbitrary tax cut of \$250 billion and, I think, a very modest estimate of revenue growth or economic growth for America, 2.3 percent, which is less than we've grown for the last 25 years. Presumably, they believe that if we balance the budget we'll grow faster, not slower. In other words, I don't think they want to balance the budget to give America a low-grade economic infection.

So I believe when we start to talk about these things and we pull out what has historically been there, which is the bipartisan support for education plus what everyone understands, which is that we've now got 20 years of stagnant incomes in this country and the only way—the only way to turn it around is to raise the educational level, I think we have an excellent chance of saving these programs because they work; they're good; they're grassroots oriented; they're not Federal bureaucracies.

Q. Mr. President, if you're to avoid the train wreck that you—[inaudible]—earlier, some in Congress have suggested that a budget summit of some kind may be the only way to work out these very stark differences between you and the Republican leadership. Is that something that you'd be willing to agree to?

The President. Well, I think the discussion of the summit is premature at this time. I do believe, as I said earlier today, I've seen in some of the comments of some of the Republican leaders the prospect that we might be able to bridge these differences. I'm willing to reach across the bridge, but it takes two people to reach across a bridge to meet in the middle somewhere. So I think we can do it. We're just going to have to work at it.

But the first thing we ought to do, and what I'm trying to do here today and what I'm trying to do this whole week with this back-to-school theme, is to try to lift this issue beyond politics, beyond partisan politics and beyond Washington politics. That is, why are we balancing the budget? Because we want to lift debt off our children, and we want to reduce borrowing now so we'll have more money available in the private sector to generate jobs and incomes. That's why we're doing it.

Why did they propose a tax cut? Why do I propose a tax cut, even though we're very different? Because we think it will make family life better; it will make child rearing stronger; it will make the economy stronger; it will make America a more solid, stronger country.

If those are our objectives then we have to pursue balancing the budget and reducing taxes in a way consistent with our objectives, not a partisan deal, not a political deal. Education, if you take it out of the equation, the objectives will fail. That's the point I'm trying to make. That's the point I want us to focus on. And it is not necessary to make these education cuts to balance the budget. I think we've got a real chance to make that case, and I'm very, very hopeful.

Bomb Plot in Austin, Texas

Q. Mr. President, word is starting to come out about the aborted bomb plot against the

IRS center in Austin, Texas. Have you been briefed on that, sir?

The President. No.
Thank you.

Budget Debate

Q. Do you think you're going to get a continuing resolution while this debate goes on?

The President. I certainly hope so. I think that's the responsible thing to do. And I think that—my guess is that there's a good chance that will occur.

Thank you.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 2:25 p.m. The President spoke from the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

September 12, 1995

Legislative Agenda

The President. Let me—first of all, I want to welcome the leadership of the Congress here and thank them for coming down to the White House for the meeting today. I'm looking forward to having a chance to discuss a number of things, including the present situation in Bosnia, the status of the welfare reform legislation, the budget—progress toward a balanced budget and a number of other issues, including the lobby reform measure passed by the Senate and the line-item veto and anything else that might be on the minds of the congressional Members who are here.

I have said before, I will say again, I'm very hopeful that we can achieve common ground on this budget. This is a truly historic moment. We do have some different priorities, but I think we can reach an agreement if we work at it. It seems clear now that such cannot be the case by the time this fiscal year ends on October the 1st, so I'm hopeful that we can, for a limited period of time, pass a continuing resolution. It would be a straightforward resolution, appropriate for the reduction of spending to meet the overall budget targets, and I look forward to working on that.